1. BRAHMA PURANA

Preliminaries

There was a forest known as Naimisharanya. The sages (maharshis) arranged for a sacrifice (yajna) in this forest and the ceremony went on for twelve years. Naimisharanya forest was a wonderful place to arrange sacrifices in. The climate was pleasant. There were trees full of climate was pleasant. There were trees full of flowers and fruit. There was no shortage of food in the forest, and animals, birds and sages lived thee happily.

Many sages came to attend the sacrifice that had been arranged in Naimisharanya. With them was Romaharshana (alternatively Lomaharshana), Veda Vyasa's disciple. Veda Vyasa had instructed this disciple of his in the knowledge of the Puranas. The assembled sages worshipped the learned Romaharshana and said, "Please tell us the stories of the Puranas. Who created the universe, who is its preserver and who will destroy it? Please instruct us in all these mysteries".

Romaharshana replied, "Many years ago, Daksha and the other sages had asked Brahma these very questions. I have learnt about Brahma's replies from my guru) teacher) Veda Vyasa. I will relate to you what I know".

In the beginning, there was water everywhere and the Brahman slept on this water in the form of Vishnu. Since water is called nara and since ayana means a bed, Vishnu is known as Narayana. In the water there emerged a golden egg. Brahma was born inside this egg. Since he created himself, he is called Svayambhu, born (bhu) by himself (svayam). For one whole year, Brahma lived inside the egg. He then split the egg into two and created heaven and the earth from the two parts of the egg. Skies, directions, time, language and senses were created in both heaven and earth. From the powers of his mind, Brahma gave birth to seven great sages. Their names were Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vashishtha. Brahma also created the god Rudra and the sage Sanatkumara.

More Creation

To continue with the process of creation, Brahma gave birth to a man and a woman from his own body. The man was named Svayambhuva Manu and the woman was named Shatarupa. Humans are descended from Manu. That is the reason they are known as manava. Manu and Shatarupa had three sons named Vira, Priyavrata and Uttanapada.

Uttanapada's son was the great Dhruva. Dhruva performed very difficult meditation (tapasya) for three thousand divine years. Brahma was so pleased at this that he granted Dhruva an eternal place in the sky, near the constellation that is known as saptarshi or the seven sages. This is the constellation Ursa Majoris and Dhruva is the pole Star.

In Dhruva's line there was a king named Prachinavarhi. Prachinavarhi had ten sons, known as the Prachetas. These Prachetas were supposed to look after the world and rule over it, but they were not interested in such mundane matters. They went off instead to perform tapasya under the ocean. The tapasya went on for ten thousand years. The upshot was that the earth had no ruler and began to suffer. People started to die and thick forests sprouted everywhere. So thick were the forests that even the winds could not blow.

News of this catastrophe reached the Prachetas. They were furious with the trees and created wind (vayu) and fire (agni) from their mouths. The wind dried up the trees and the fire burnt them, so that, very soon, there were very few trees left on earth.

Everyone was alarmed at the effects of the Prachetas anger. The moon-god Soma (or Chandra) came to the Prachetas with a beautiful woman and said, "Prachetas, please control your anger. You need someone to rule over the world so that you can concentrate on your tapasya. This woman is named Marisha. Her son will rule over the world".

The Prachetas agreed to this proposal and Daksha was born. The word praja means subject and the word pati means master. Since Daksha ruled over the world and its subjects, Daksha came to be known as Prajapati.

The sages interrupted Romaharshana. They said, "Sage, we are

completely confused. We have heard that Daksha was born from Brahma's toe. And yet you have told us that Daksha was the son of the Prachetas. How is this possible?"

Romaharshana replied, "There is no reason for bewilderment. Many Dakshas have been bom to rule over the world. One was born from Brahma's toe, yet another was the son of the Prachetas."

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Daksha's Offspring

Daksha's wife was named Asikli and Asikli gave birth to five thousand sons. They were known as the Haryashvas. The Haryashvas were destined

to rule over the world. But the sage Narada went to the Haryashvas and said, "How can you rule over the world if you don't even know what the world looks like? Are you familiar with its geography and its limits? First find out about these things, before you contemplate ruling over the world."

The Haryashvas went off to explore the world and never returned.

Daksha and Asikli then had another thousand sons who were named the Shavalashvas. Narada told them what he had told the Haryashvas and the Shavalashvas also went off to explore the world and never returned.

Daksha and Asikli were distressed that their children should disappear in this manner. Daksha blamed Narada for the instigation and proposed to kill him. But Brahma intervened and persuaded Daksha to control his anger. This Daksha agreed to do, provided that his conditions were met. "Brahma must marry my daughter Priya," he said. "And Narada must be born as Priya's son."

These conditions were accepted. In fact, Daksha and Asikli had sixty daughters. (Elsewhere, the Brahma Purana mentions fifty daughters.) Ten of these daughters were married to the god Dharma and thirteen to the sage Kashyapa. Twenty-seven daughters were married to Soma or Chandra. The remaining daughters were married to the sages Arishtanemi, Vahuputra, Angirasa and Krishashva.

The ten daughters who were married to the god Dharma were named Arundhati, Vasu, Yami, Lamba, Bhanu, Marutvati, Sankalpa, Muhurta. Sadhya and Vishva. Arundhati's children were the objects (vishaya) of the world. Vasu's children were the eight gods known as the Vasus. Their names were Apa, Dhruva, Soma, Dhara, Salila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa. Anala's son was Kumara. Because Kumara was brought up by goddesses known as the Krittikas, he came to be called Kartikeya. Prabhasa's son was Vishvakarma. Vishvakarma was skilled in architecture and the making of jewelry. He became the architect of the gods.

Sadhya's children were the gods known as Sadhyadevas and Vishva's children were the gods known as Vishvadervas. The twenty-seven

daughters of Daksha who were married to Soma are known as the nakshatras (stars).

As you have already been told, Kashyapa married thirteen of Daksha's daughters. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arishta, Surasa, Khasa, Surabhi, Vinata. Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ila, Kadru and Muni.

Aditi's sons were the twelve gods known as the adityas. Their names were Vishnu, Shakra. Aryama, Dhata, Vidhata, Tvashta, Pusha, Vivasvana, Savita, MitraVaruna, Amsha andBhaga.

Diti's sons were the daityas (demons). They were named Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu, and amongst their descendants were several other powerful daityas liked Bali and Banasura. Diti also had a daughter named Simhika who was married to a danava (demon) named Viprachitti. Their

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offspring's were terrible demons like Vatapi, Namuchi, Ilvala, Maricha and thenivatakavachas.

The hundred sons of Danu came to be known as danavas. The danavas

were thus cousins to the daityas and also to the adityas. In the danava line were bom demons like the poulamas and kalakeyas.

Arishta's sons were the gandharvas (singers of heaven). Surasa gave birth to the snakes (sarpa). Khasa's children were the yakshas (demi-gods who were the companions of Kubera, the god of wealth) and the rakshasas (demons). Surabhi's descendants were cows and buffaloes.

Vinata had two sons named Aruna and Garuda. Garuda became the king of the birds. Tamra has six daughters. From these daughters were born owls, eagles, vultures, crows, water-fowl, horses, camels and donkeys.

Krodhavasha had fourteen thousand children known as nagas (snakes). Ila gave birth to trees, creepers, shrubs and bushes. Kadru's sons were also known as nagas or snakes. Among the more important of Kadru's sons were Ananta, Vasuki, Takshaka andNahusha.

Muni gave birth to the apsaras (dancers of heaven). Diti's children (daityas) and Auditi's children (adityas) continually fought amongst themselves. On one particular occasion, the gods succeed in killing many of the demons. Thirsting for revenge, Diti began to pray to her husband, Kashyapa that she might given birth to a son who would kill Indra, the king of the gods.

Kashyapa found it difficult to refuse his wife outright. "All right", he said. "You have to bear the son in your womb for a hundred years. And throughout this period, you will have indeed kill Indira. But if you do not observe these instructions to the letter, your desire will not be satisfied."

Diti resolved to do as her husband had bidden her. But Indra had got to know about Diti's resolve and was waiting for an opportunity to save himself. There was an occasion when, tired after her prayers. Diti went to sleep without first washing her feet. This was an unclean act and it gave Indra the required opportunity. He adopted a miniscule form and entered Diti's womb. With his weapon vajra, he sliced up the baby inside the womb into seven parts. The baby naturally began to cry at the pain.

Indra kept on saying, "ma ruda," that is, "don't cry." But the bay, or rather its seven parts, would not listen. Indra thereupon sliced up each of the seven parts into seven more sections, so that there were forty-nine

sections in all. When these forty-nine sections were born, they came to known as the Maruts, from the words that Indra had addressed them. Since Diti had not been able to adhere to the conditions her husband had set, the Maruts did not kill Indra. They instead became Indra's followers or companions, and were treated as gods.

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Prithu

In Dhruva's line there was a king named Anga, Anga was religious and followed the righteous path. But unfortunately, Anga's son Vena inherited

none of the good qualities of his father. Vena's mother was Sunitha and she happened to be the daughter of Mrityu. Mrityu was notorious for his evil ways and deeds. Vena spent a lot of time with his maternal grandfather and picked up these evil characteristics.

Vena gave up the religion that was laid down in the Vedas and stopped all yajnas. He instructed his subjects that he alone was to be worshiped.

The sages led by Marichi came to Vena to try and persuade him to mend his ways. But Vena was in no mood to listen. He insisted that there was no one equal to him in the whole universe.

The sages realized that Vena was a lost cause. They physically caught hold of Vena and began to knead his right thigh. From this kneading thee emerged a horrible looking creature. It was a dwarf and its complexion, was extremely dark. The sage Atri was so aghast at the dwarfs appearance that he blurted out, "nishida", which means "sit". From this, the dwarf came to be known as nishada. The race of nishadas became hunters and fishermen, and lived in the Vindhya mountains. From them were also descended uncivilized races like Tusharas and Tunduras.

The evil that was in Vena's body and mind came out with the emergence of the nishada.

When the sages began to knead Vena's right arm, Prithu emerged. He shone like a flaming fire and his energy lit up the four directions. He held a bow in his hand and he was clad in beautiful armour. As soon as Prithu was born, Vena died.

All the rivers and the oceans arrived with their waters and their jewels to anoint Prithu as the king. The gods and the sages also came for the coronation. Brahma himself crowned Prithu the king of the earth. He also took the opportunity to apportion out the lordships of other parts of the universe. Soma was appointed lord over creepers, herbs, starts (nakshatras), planets (grahas), sacrifices, meditation (tapasya) and over the first of the four classes (brahmanas). Varuna became lord of the oceans, Kubera of all the kings, Vishnu of the adityas, Agni of vasus, Daksha of all Prahlada of daityas and danavas, Yama of the pritris (ancestors), Shiva of yakshas, rakshasas and pishachas (ghosts), and

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The ocean (samudra) was made the lord of all rivers. Chitraratha of gandharvas, Vasuki of nagas, Takshaka of sarpas, Garuda of birds, the tiger of deer, Airavata of elephants, Ucchaihshrava of horses, the bull of cows and the ashvattha tree (a banyan) of all trees. Brahma also appointed four overlords (dikapalas) for the four directions. To the east there was Sudhanva, to the south Shankhapada, to the west Ketumana and to the north Hiranyaroma.

Prithu was a king who ruled the earth well. During his reign, the earth was laden with foodgrains. The cows were full of milk and the subjects were happy. To glorify King Prithu, the sages performed a sacrifice and from this sacrifice there emerged two races known as the sutas and the magadhas should sing praises in honor of Prithu.

"But what praise will we sing?" asked the sutas and the magadhas. "Prithu is still young. He has not done much that can be praised".

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Having leamt of these future deeds from the sages, the sutas and the magadhas began to compose songs and chant praises in honor of Prithu. These stories were related throughout the earth. Some of Prithu's subjects heard these stories and came to see Prithu. "King," they said. "We have heard of your great deeds. But we find it difficult to make a living. Please indicate to us our habitations on earth. And tell us where we may be able to get the food we need for subsistence."

King Prithu picked up his bow and arrow. He decided to kill the earth, since the earth was not yielding foodgrains to his subjects. The earth adopted the form of a cow and began to flee. But wherever the earth went, Prithu followed with his bow and arrow. He followed the earth to the heaven and to the underworld.

Finally, in desperation, the earth started to pray to Prithu. "King," she said, "please control your anger. I am a woman. Killing me will only mean a sin for you. Besides, what purpose will killing me serve? Your subjects will then be without a place to live in. There must be some other way of ensuring that your subjects can make a living.

The earth then herself offered a solution and King Prithu did her bidding. With his bow, he leveled out the earth. The plains could now be used for villages and cities and for agriculture and animal husbandry. The plains could now be used for villages and cities and for agriculture and animal husbandry. The mountains were gathered together in select places, instead of being littered over whole earth. Earlier, Prithu's subjects had lived off fruits and roots. Now Prithu milked the earth (in her form of a cow) and obtained the seeds of foodgrains on which people could live. Because of Prithu's deeds, the earth came to be known as prithivi.

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Manvantaras

A manvantara is an era. There are four smaller eras (yugas) and their names are Satya or Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga.

Each cycle of Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga is called a mahayuga. A mahayuga comprises of 12,000 years of the gods, or equivalently, 4320,000 years for human. 71 mahayugas constitute a manvantara and 14 manvantaras constitute a cycle (kalpa). One kalpa is one of Brahma's days and the universe is destroyed at the end of a Kalpa.

Each manvantara is ruled over by a Manu. In the present kalpa, six manvantaras have already passed and the names of the six Manus who ruled were Svayambhuva, Svarochisha, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata and Chakshusha. The name of the seventh Manu, who rules over the seventh manvantara of the present kalpa, is Vaivasvata.

The titles of the seven great sages (saptarshi) as well as the tile of Indra change from manvantara to manvantara. The gods also change.

In the present vaivasvata manvantara, the seven great sages are Atri, Vashishtha, Kashyapa, Goutama, Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra and Jamadagni. The gods now are the sadhyas, the rudras, the vishwadevas, the vasus, the maruts, the adityas and the two ashvinis.

There will be seven Manus in the future before the universe is destroyed. Five of these Manus will be known as Savarni Manus. The remaining two will be called Bhoutya andRouchya.

Manvantaras

A manvantara is an era. There are four smaller eras (yugas) and their names are Satya or Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Each cycle of Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga is called a mahayuga. A mahayuga comprises of 12,000 years of the gods, or equivalently, 4320,000 years for human. 71 mahayugas constitute a manvantara and 14 manvantaras constitute a cycle (kalpa). One kalpa is one of Brahma's days and the universe is destroyed at the end of a Kalpa.

Each manvantara is ruled over by a Manu. In the present kalpa, six manvantaras have already passed and the names of the six Manus who ruled were Svayambhuva, Svarochisha, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata and Chakshusha. The name of the seventh Manu, who rules over the seventh manvantara of the present kalpa, is Vaivasvata.

The titles of the seven great sages (saptarshi) as well as the tile of Indra change from manvantara to manvantara. The gods also change.

In the present vaivasvata manvantara, the seven great sages are Atri, Vashishtha, Kashyapa, Goutama, Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra and Jamadagni. The gods now are the sadhyas, the rudras, the vishwadevas, the vasus, the maruts, the adityas and the two ashvinis.

There will be seven Manus in the future before the universe is destroyed. Five of these Manus will be known as Savarni Manus. The remaining two will be called Bhoutya and Rouchya.

The Sun and the Solar Dynasty

You have probably forgotten by now that Kashyapa and Aditi had a son named Vivasvana. This was the sun god, also known as Surya or

Martanda.

Surya was married to Samjna, Vishvakarma's daughter. They had two sons. The fist son was Vaivasvata Manu and the second son was Yama or Shradhadeva, the god of death. Yama had a twin sister named Yamuna. The sun's energy was so strong that Samjna could not bear to look at her husband. Through her powers, she created an image from her own body that looked exactly like her. This image was called Chhaya (shadow).

Samjna told Chhaya, "I cannot bear the energy of my husband, I am going off to my father's house. Stay here, pretend to be Samjna and look after my children. Under no circumstances tell anyone, certainly not my husband, that your are not Samjna."

"I will do as you have asked me to," replied Chhaya. "But the moment someone curses me or pulls me by the hair, I shall be forced to reveal the truth."

Samjna went to her father Vishvakarma kept asking her to return to her husband. But this Samjna refused to do. Instead, she went to the land known as Uttara Kuru and started to live there as a mare.

Meanwhile, Surya, who had not realized that Samjna had been replaced by Chhaya, had two sons through Chhaya. They were named Savarni Manu and Shani (Saturn). As soon as her own children were bom, Chhaya no longer displayed as much of love for Samjna's children as she used to do. Vaivasvata Manu was a quiet sort of person and he ignored the implied neglect. But Yama was not the tolerant. Besides, he was also younger. He raised his leg to kick Chhaya. At this, Chhaya cursed Yama that his legs would fall off.

Yama went and complained to Surya. " I have not really kicked her," he said. "I only threatened to. And does a mother ever curse her children?"

"I can't undo the curse, " replied Surya. "At best, I can reduce its severity. Your legs will not actually fall off. Some of the flesh from your legs will fall off onto the earth and create worms. Thereby, you will be freed of your curse."

But nevertheless, Surya felt that there was some truth in Yama's asking

whether a mother would ever curse her children. He taxed Chhaya with the truth, but Chhaya would not reveal anything Surya then grasped her by the hair and threatened to curse her. Since her conditions were now violated, Chhaya blurted out the truth.

In an extremely angry mood, Surya dashed off to Vishvakarma's house. Vishvakarma tried to cool him down, "it is all because of your exercises energy that this has happened, exclaimed Vishvakarma. "If you permit, I will shave off some of the extra energy. Then Samjna will be able to look at you."

Surya agreed to this proposition. With the shaved off energy, Vishvakarma manufactured Vishnu's chakra (a weapon like a bladed discus).

Surya found out that Samjna was in Uttara Kuru in the form of a mare. He joined her there in the form of a horse. As horse, they had two sons named Nasatya and Dasra. Since ashva means horse, the sons were also known as the two Ashvinish and became the physicians of the gods.

Surya and Samjna then gave up their equine forms and lived happily ever after.

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Vaivasvata Manu's Children

Vaivasvata Manu has no children and he arranged for a sacrifice so that he might have a son. Nine sons were born as a result of this sacrifice.

Their names were Ikshvaku, Nabhaga, Dhrishta, Sharyati, Narishyanta, Pramashu, Rishta, Karusha and Prishadhra. Manu also made an offering to the two gods Mitra and Varuna. As a result of this offering, a daughter named Ila was born.

Budha was the son of Chandra, and Budha and Ila had a son named Pururva. Subsequently, thanks to a boon conferred on her by Mitra and Varuna. Ila became a man named Sudyumna. Sudyumna's sons were Utkala, Gaya and Vinatashva. Utkala ruled in Orissa, Gaya in the region that is also called Gaya, and Vinatashva in the west.

Sudyumna was not entitled to rule since he had earlier been a woman. He lived in the city known as Pratishthana. Pururava inherited this later on.

When Vaivasvata Manu died, his ten sons divided up the earth amongst themselves, Ikshvaku ruled in the central regions. He had a hundred sons, the eldest of whom was named Vikukshi. Vikukshi came to be known as Shashada. Thereby hangs a tale.

Ikshvaku wanted to organize a sacrifice and he sent his son Vikukshi to the forest to fetch some meat for the sacrifice. While hunting for game, Vikukshi felt very hungry and ate up some of the meat. This was a sacrilege and the sage Vashishtha advised Ikshvaku to banish Vikukshi from his kingdom. Because the meat that he had eaten had been the meat of a rabbit (shashaka), Vikukshi came to be known as Shashada.

But after Ikshvaku died, Vikukshi returned to his father's kingdom and began to rule there. This was the kingdom of Ayodhya. One of Vikukshi's sons was Kakutshta, and Rama of Ramayana fame was born in this line.

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Kubalashva

Kubalashva was one of the kings descended from Kakutstha. Kubalashva's father was named Vrihadashva. After Vrihadashva had

ruled for many years, he desired to retire to the forest. He therefore prepared to hand over the kingdom to his son Kubalashva. But learning of King Vrihadashva's resolve, a sage named Utanka came to meet the king.

"Don't go to the forest right now", Utanka told the king. My hermitage (ashrama) is on the shores of the ocean and is surrounded by sand in all directions. A strong rakshasa named Dhundhu lives under the sand. He is so strong that even the gods have been unable to kill him. Once every year, Dhundhu exhales his breath and this raises a tremendous cloud of sand and dust. For an entire week the sun remains shrouded in dust and for the whole week, there are earthquakes as a result of Dhundhu's exhalation. This is disturbing my mediation (tapasya) and you can't very well go away to the forest without first doing something about Dhundhu. Only you are capable of killing him. I have accumulated a lot of power as a result of my tapasya and I will give this to you if you kill Dhundhu."

Vrihadashva told Utanka that there was no need for Vrihadashva himself to kill Dhundhu. He would go to the forest as he had decided. His son Kubalashva was perfectly capable of killing Dhundhu and would accompany Utanka.

Kubalashva and his hundred sons went to the shores of the ocean where all the sand was. Kubalashva asked his sons to start digging so that they might find Dhundhu. Dhundhu attacked Kubalashva's sons and killed all of them but three. The three who escaped were named Dridashva, Chandrashva and Kapilashva. But Dhundhu himself was killed by Kubalashva. As a result of this great feat, Kubalashva came to be known as Dhundhumara. The sage Utanka blessed Kubalashva and by the sage's blessings, Kubalashva's dead sons went straight to heaven.

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Trishanku

From Dridashva was descended a king named Trayaruni. Trayaruni was a righteous king and followed all the religious dictates. But Trayarun's son

Satyavrata was quite the opposite and refused to follow the righteous path. King Trayaruni's chief priest was the great sage Vashishtha. Vashishtha advised the king that his evil son should be banished from the kingdom. Trayaruni accepted the sage's advice. Consequently, Satyavrata started to live with outcasts (chandalas) outside the kingdom.

After some time, Trayaruni relinquished his kingship and went away to the forest. The kingdom had no king and degenerated into anarchy. The absence of a king is also frowned upon by the gods and for twelve years there was a terrible drought.

Vishvamitra was another great sage. While all this was going on, Vishvamitra was not present in the kingdom. He had gone away to perform tapasya on the shores of the ocean, having left his wife and children in a hermitage (ashrama) that was in the kingdom. But because there was such a long spell of drought, there was also famine in the kingdom. People started to starve. Vishvamitra's wife decided to sell her son so that she might have some food to eat. She tied a rope round the son's neck and took him to the market-place. There, she sold him in exchange for a thousand cows. Since a rope had been tied around the son's neck (gala), he came to be known as Galava.

But Satyavrata discovered what terrible straits Vishvamitra's family was in. He freed Galava and started to take care of Vishvamitra's wife and children.

Satyavrata had not been terribly fond of Vashishtha. He blamed the sage for his banishment. When thee was famine everywhere, Satyavrata stole Vashishtha's cow. He killed the cow and served the meat to Vishvamitra's sons, apart from eating it himself.

Vashishtha was in a terrible rage when he got to know about this incident. He cursed Satyavrata.

"You have committed three sins (shanku)," Vashishtha told Satyavrata. "Firstly, you have angered your father Trayaruni. Secondly, you have stolen and killed a cow. Thirdly, you have eaten beef, a forbidden meat. Because of these three sins, you will henceforth be known as Trishanku and be eternally cursed." (The word tri means three.)

Satyavrata had however taken care of Vishvamitra's family when the sage was away on his meditation. After Vishvamitra returned, he was very happy to learn about what Trishanku had done and offered to grant him a boon. Trishanku desired the boon that he might be allowed to go to heaven in his own physical body. Thanks to Vishvamitra's immense powers, even this virtually impossible task was accomplished. Trishanku became king in Trayaruni's kingdom and Vishvamitra acted as his chief priest.

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Sagara

Trishanku's son was Harishchandra and from Harishchandra was descended a king named Bahu. Bahu devoted too much time to

pleasurable pursuits. The upshot of this was that the defence of the kingdom was not properly taken care of. Enemy kings seized this opportunity to attack Bahu's kingdom. They drove Bahu out and Bahu went off to the forest with his wifeYadavi,

The enemy kings who dislodged Bahu were led by the Haihaya and Talajangha kings. They were aided by the Shakas, Yavanas, Paradas, Kambojas andPahlavas.

King Bahu died in the forest. His wife Yadavi desired to die on her husband's funeral pyre. But since Yadavi was pregnant at the time, the sage Ourva persuaded her that such an act would be a sin. He brought Yadavi to his own hermitage and began to take care of her.

Bahu had also a second wife and she had once tried to poison Yadavi. The poison (gara) had however done Yadavi no harm and emerged when the baby was born. Since the baby was born together with poison, he came to known as Sagara.

The sage Ourva took care of Sagara's education. He imparted to Sagara the knowledge of all the shastras and also the usage of weapons. Amongst other things, Sagara acquired the skill of using a divine weapon known as agneyastra.

When he grew up, Sagara attacked the Haihaya kings and defeated them through the use of agneyastra. He then defeated the Shakas, Yavanas, Paradas, Kambojas and Pahlavas and was about to kill them all. But these enemy kings fled to the sage Vashishtha for refuge and Vashishtha persuaded Sagara not to kill his enemies. Instead, the heads of the Shakas were half shaven off. The Yavanas and Kambojas had their heads completely shaven. The Pahlavas were instructed that they would have to keep beards. These enemy kings also lost all right to follow the religion laid down in the Vedas. Amongst the other kings who Sagara defeated were the Konasarpas, the Mahishakas, the Darvas, the Cholas and the Keralas.

King Sagara had two wives. The first was named Keshini and she was the daughter of the king of Vidarbha. The Brahma Purana does not tell us the name of the second wife but from the Mahabharataa we know that it was

Sumati. Keshini and Sumati had no sons. They therefore began to pray to Ourva so that they might have sons.

Ourva was pleased at these prayers and said, " Both of you will have sons. But one of you will have a single son and the other will have sixty thousand sons. Tell me, who wants what."

Keshini asked for a single son and Sumati asked for sixty thousand sons. In due course, Keshini gave birth to a son named Panchajana. Sumati gave birth to a gourd. Inside the gourd there was a lump of meat. The gourd was placed inside a pot full of clarified butter (ghrita). And from the lump of meat were born sixty thousand sons.

King Sagara proceeded to conquer the entire earth. As a recognition of this conquest, he initiated an ashvamedha yajna (horse sacrifice). In this ceremony, the sacrificial horse is left free to wander all over the earth. The sixty thousand sons accompanied the horse as its guards. The horse eventually reached the shores of the ocean that lies towards the south-east. While Sagara's sons were resting, the horse was stolen. The sons started to look for the horse and began to dig

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up the sands in their search. In this process, they came upon the sage Kapila. Kapila had been meditating and his meditation was disturbed by the terrible din that Sagara's sons made. He gazed at them in fury and all but four of the sons were burnt to ashes. The four sons who were saved

were named Varhiketu, Suketu, Dharmaketu andPanchajana.

The Brahma Purana is slightly confused here. Was Panchajana Keshini's son or Sumati's son? There is some inconsistency with the account given in the Mahabharataa. In the Mahabharataa, it is Keshini who gave birth to sixty thousand sons and it is Sumati who had a single son named Asamanja. Also in the Mahabharataa, all sixty thousand sons were burnt to ashes.

The Brahma Purana also tells us that the sacrificial horse was obtained by Sagara from the ocean. This is the reason why the ocean is referred to as sagara.

To come back to the account given in the Brahma Purana. Panchajana's son was Amshumana and Amshumana's son was Dilipa. Dilipa had a son named Bhagiratha. Bhagiratha brought down the river Ganga from heaven to earth and thus redeemed his ancestors who had been burnt to ashes by Kapila. It was because of this that the river Ganga came to be known as Bhagirathi.

From Bhagiratha was descended Raghu. Raghu's son was Aja, Aja's son Dasharatha and Dasharatha's son Rama.

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The Moon and the Lunar Dynasty

There was a sage named Atri. Atri performed very difficult tapasya. So difficult was the tapasya that Atri's energy was thrown up into the sky.

The sky could not bear this energy and hurled it down onto the earth. This energy then gave birth to Soma or Chandra, the moon god. Brahma took Chandra up into his chariot and drove the chariot around the earth twenty-one times. From whatever energy was left after Chandra has been created, the herbs were born.

Chandra also performed very difficult tapasya. One padma year consists of 10,000,000,000,000 normal years. For one hundred such padma years, Chandra mediated. After the meditation was over, Brahma appointed Chandra lord over seeds, herbs, brahmanas and the oceans. Chandra also performed a rajasuya yajna (royal sacrifice) as a celebration of his lordship. This gave him a lot pomp, glory, wealth and respect.

But all this merely served to turn Chandra's head. The guru (teacher) of the gods was the sage Brihaspati. Brihaspati had a wife named Tara and Chandra abducted Tara. Despite the gods and the sages asking Chandra to return Tara, the moon god would not listen. A terrible war then raged over Tara, the gods fighting for Chandra. Shukracharya, the guru of the demons, fought on Chandra's side and Shiva fought on Brihaspati's side. This war (Samgram) came to be known as tarakamaya samgram, since it was fought over Tara.

Finally Brahma intervened and a truce was called. But Chandra and Tara had by then had a son, and Brihaspati refused to accept this son as his own. This son was Budha. As you already known, Budha married Ila and they had a son named Pururava.

The Brahma Purana now describes several kings belonging to the lunar dynasty.

The Moon and the Lunar Dynasty

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The Brahma Purana now describes several kings belonging to the lunar dynasty.

Yayati

In the lunar dynasty, there was bom a powerful king named Nahusha. He married Viraja and they had six sons named Yati, Yajati, Samyati, Ayati,

Yati, and Suyati. Yati became a hermit. So although Yayati was not the eldest, he was crowned king after Nahusha.

Yayati had two wives. The first was Devayani, daughter of Shukracharya. And the second was Sharmishtha, daughter of Vrishaparva, the king of the danavas. Devayani had two sons named Yadu and Turvasu and Sharmishtha had three sons named Druhya, Anu and Puru. Yayati conquered the whole earth and ruled over it. When he became old, he divided the earth amongst his five sons. Yadu was given the lands to the east, Puru the lands in the center, Turvasu the lands to the south and south-east, Druhya those to the north and Anu those to the west.

Yayati gave up his weapons and decided to travel throughout the world. He called Yadu to him and said, "I wish to explore the world and my old age is a hindrance. Please accept my old age and give me your youth in return."

Yadu refused. "I will not," he said. "One cannot eat well when one is old, nor can one pleasure the comforts of the world. Old age is not pleasant. Ask one of my brothers instead." Yadu's refusal angered Yayati. He cursed Yadu that he or his descendants would never be kings. Yayati next requested Druhya, Turvasu and Anu, but they too refused and were similarly cursed by their father. But Puru agreed to his father's request and gladly accepted the old age. He was blessed by his father.

After many years had passed, Yayati got tired of the world and returned Puru's youth to him. He accepted back his old age and retired to the forest to mediate.

From Puru was descended King Bharataa after whom the land came to be known as Bharataavarsha. Also in this line was King Kuru, after whom all the descendants came to be known as Kauravas. The sacred place named Kurukshetra owes its name to King Kuru.

From Turvasu were descended the kings of Pandya, Kerala, Kola and Chola. From Druhya were descended the kings of Gandhara. The horses of the Gandhara kingdom are famous.

Yadu had five sons, Sahasrada, Payoda, Kroshtu, Nila and Anjika. Sahasrada's descendants were the Haihayas, amongst whom the most

famous was Kartyavirya Arjuna. Arjuna pleased the sage Dattatreya and became invincible. He also had a thousand arms. Arjuna's greatest deeds were his defeat and imprisonment of Ravana, king of Lanks. Kroshtu's descendants were Vrishni and Andhaka and in the Vrishni line was born Krishna.

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Geography

Having heard accounts of the solar and lunar dynasties, the sages requested Romaharshana. "Tell us a little about the geography of the

world. What does the earth look like? What are its limits?"

Romaharshana obligedand said— The earth is divided into seven regions (dvipas). Their names are Jambudvipa, Plakshadvipa, Shalmaladvipa, Kushadvipa, Krounchadvipa, Shakadvipa and Pushkaradvipa. These regions are surrounded by seven oceans and their names are Lavana, Ikshu, Sura, Sarpi, Dadhi, Dugdha and Jala.

Jambudvipa is in the center and right in the middle of Jambudvipa is Mount Sumeru. To the south of Sumeru are the mountains Himavana, Hemakuta and Nishadha and to the north of Sumeru are the mountains Nila, Shveta and Sringi. Jambudvipa itself is divided into several regions (varshas). For example, Sumeru is in the middle of Ilavritavarsha. Braratavarsha is to the south of Sumeru. To the east of Sumeru is Bhadrashvarsha and to the west is Ketumalavarsha. Harivarsha lies to the south and Ramyakavarsha to the north. Still further north is Hiranmayavarsha and beyond that, Uttara Kuruvarsha.

Brahma's city is on the peak of Sumeru. It is there that the river Ganga descends from heaven and gets divided into four tributaries. Sita flows eastwards, Chakshu westwards, Bhadra Northwards and Alakananda southwards into Bharataavarsha.

There are seven major mountain range sin Bharataavarsha and their names are Mahendra, Malya, Sahya, Shuktimana, Riksha, Vindhya and Pariyatra. Bharataavarsha itself is divided into nine regions (dvipas). The names of eight of these regions are Indradvipa, Soumya, Gandharva and Varuna. The ninth region is completely surrounded by the ocean in all directions. To the east of Bharataavarsha live the Kiratas and to the west the Yavanas.

Below the earth lie the seven regions of the underworld (Patala). Their names are Atala, Vitala, Nitala, Sutala, Talatala, Rasatala and Patala. The daityas, danavas and the snakes (sarpa) live there. The underworld is a wonderful place, more beautiful than heaven itself. The sage Narada once went on a trip to the underworld and was bowled over by its beauty. It is full of palaces and jewels. The sun rises there, but does not radiate too much of heat. The moon also rises, but its beams are not at all chilly. The forests are populated by beautiful trees and the ponds are thick with lotus

flowers, the songs of cuckoo birds are heard everywhere. Below the underworld sleeps a great snake, known as Shesha or Ananta. It has a thousand hoods, all covered with jewels. In fact, this snake is really Vishnu in one of this various forms.

Also part of the world are hells (naraka), presided over by Yama, the god of death. Those are full of weapons, fire and poisons and sinners are sent there to be punished. Sins that are punished by dispatch to one of the several hells are lying, murder, killing cows, destroying cities, drinking, killing brahmanas, theft, selling wines or hair, criticizing the Vedas, insulting elders, making weapons, selling salt, destroying forests needlessly, killing sheep or deer, cheating and studying under one's own son. Each sinner receives a punishment that is in proportion to the severity of his sin. Of course, if one performs penance (prayashchitta) for one's sins, one need not go to naraka. The best form of penance is praying to Krishna.

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(Shani), the Great Bear constellation (saptarshi) and the Pole Star (Dhruva). The region from the solar circle to Dhruvaloka is known as heaven (Svarloka or svarga). Beyond Dhruvaloka is Maharloka and further away, Janaloka are Tapaloka and Satyaloka. At the end of a kalpa, all the three lokas (regions) of bhuloka, bhuvarloka and svarloka are destroyed. But the four lokas of Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka are not destroyed.

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Konaraka

There is an ocean to the south of Bharataavarsha. One the shores of this great ocean there is a land named Ondra or Utkala (present Orissa).

Utkala is populated by religious people and the brahmanas who live there are learned in the Vedas. They are very good priests, learned in the Puranas and the shastras and skilled in the art of sacrifices. In the land of Utkala, there is an image of the sun (Surya) known as Konaditya. The word aditya also means the sun, as does the word arka. Thus, Konaditya is the same as Konarka, a corruption of the latter word being Konaraka. The image of Konaditys is so wonderful that even if one gazes at the image, all one's sins are forgiven.

All around the temple there is sand. But nevertheless, many trees grow around the temple. The best time to worship the sun there is at the time of sunrise. One has to face the east and draw a lotus flower on the ground with red sandalwood. The lotus flower must have exactly eight petals. A copper vessel has to be placed at the center of the flower and filled with paddy, sesamum water, red sandalwood, red flowers and sacred grass. One prays to Surya to descend on the lotus flower that has thus been drawn. If one worships Konaditya according to these prescribed rites, the sins of seven preceding generations are forgiven.

The twelve adityas are nothing but different forms of Surya. Their names are Indra. Dhata, Parjanya, Tvashta, Pusha Aryama, Bhaga Vivasvana, Vishnu, Amshumana, Varuna, and Mitra. As Indra, Surya destroys the enemies of the gods. As Dhata, he creates living beings. As Parjanya, he showers down rain. As Tvashta, he lives in the trees and herbs. As Pusha, he makes foodgrains grow. As Aryama, he is in the wind. As Bhaga, he is in the body of all living beings. As Vivasvana, he is in fire and helps to cook food. As Vishnu, he destroys the enemies of the gods. As Amshumana, he is again in the wind. As Varuna, Surya is in the waters and as Mitra, he is in the moon and in the oceans.

In each month of the year, it is a different aditya who shines. Indra shines in the month of Ashvina, Dhata in Kartika, Parjanya in Shravana, Tvashta in Falguna, Pusha in Pousha, Aryama in Vaishakha, Bhaga in Magha, Vivasvana in Jyaishtha, Vishnu in Chaitra, Amshumana in Ashada, Varuna, in Bhadra and Mitra in Agrahayana. Vishnu has twelve hundred rays, Aryama one thousand and three hundred. Vivasvana seventy-two, Amshumana fifteen, Parjanya seventy-two, Varuna one thousand and three hundred, Tvashta one thousand and one hundred, Indra two thousand and two hundred, Dhata eleven hundred, Mitra one thousand

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Brahma once recounted to the sages the one hundred and eight sacred names of Surya. The Brahma Purana lists these names and we reproduce them in nine groups of twelve names each.

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(6) Vibhavasu, Shashvata, Purusha, Yogi, Vyaktavyakta, Sanatana, Kaladhyaksha, Prajadhyaksha, Vishvakarama, Tamonuda, Varuna, Sagara.

(7) Amsha, Jimuta, Jivana, Ariha, Bhutashraya, Bhutapati, Sarvalokanamaskrita, Shrashta, Samvartaka, Vahni, Sarvadi, Alolupa.

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Indradyumna and Purushaottama Kshetra

In Satya Yuga there was a king named Indradyumna. He was a very powerful king as Indra himself. He was handsome, honest and truthful,

learned in the shastras and the Vedas, and skilled in the use of weapons. His radiance put the sun to shame. Indradyumna was devoted to Vishnu. He once decided that he would worship Vishnu. A tirtha is a sacred place of pilgrimage. Indradyumna scanned all the existing tirthas and cities. But none of them satisfied him. None of them, he felt, was appropriate as a place for worshipping Vishnu.

Indradyumna's own capital was the city of Avanti, in the kingdom of Malva. Avanti was a beautiful and wealthy city, surrounded on all sides by moats and other fortifications. Traders from many countries came there with all sorts or commodities for trading. The roads of the city were lined with shopes. The houses were painted white. The king's stables were full of horses and elephants. All citizens of Avanti were pleasant of appearance and happy. Sacrifices were held fairly often. Many were the temples, groves and ponds in Avanti. Any tree that grew on earth could be found there.

There was a temple to Shiva in the city. This was known as the temple of Mahakala. The image there was so sacred that worshipping Shiva in the temple of Mahakala was tantamount to performing one thousand ashvamedha yajnas.

The river Shipra flowed past Avanti. On the banks of the river there was a temple of Vishnu known as Govindasvami. Another temple to Vishnu was named Vikramasvami. But Indradyumna was not satisfied with these temples. He wanted to build another temple to Vishnu. He left Avanti to look for a proper place. His soldiers and subjects accompanied their king, so that it looked as if the entire city of Avanti was on the march. After traveling for many days, they arrived on the shores of the southern ocean, the ocean that is known as lavana samudra.

There were so many waves in the ocean that the ocean itself seemed to be dancing. Marine animals lived in the ocean and the waters were also the source of all sorts of jewels. Indradyumna began to live on the shores of the ocean. He discovered a place near the ocean that was thick with flower and fruit trees. Many types of birds gathered there to eat the fruit. This was the place known as Purushaottama kshetra (place), the city of Puri of modern times.

Purshottama kshetra was a very important tirtha. But all knowledge of this tirtha had been hidden until Indradyumna arrived on the scene. There was a reason for this. Many years ago, there used to be an image of Vishnu there, where people used to pray. So sacred was the image that all the sins of the worshippers were immediately forgiven. The result was that Yama could not punish any of the sinners. They simply prayed to Vishnu's image and escaped. Yama therefore prayed to Vishnu for a solution. Vishnu hid the image under the sand so that no one knew that it existed.

Indradyumna liked Purushaottama Kshetra. The river Mahanadi or Chitropala flowed not very far away. The people who lived around the place were religious. He decided that this was the right place for building a temple to Vishnu. On an auspicious day, the foundation stone was laid.

Indradyumna then got in touch with the kings of Kalkinga, Utakala and Koshala. He requested their help in fetching stones for the building of the temple. The kings sent their architects to the Vindhya mountains. The stones were gathered from these mountains and brought to Purushaottama Kshetra in boats and chariots. Messengers were also sent to several other kings for aid. They came with their armies and with a lot of wealth.

Indradyumna and Purushaottama Kshetra

In Satya Yuga there was a king named Indradyumna. He was a very powerful king as Indra himself. He was handsome, honest and truthful, learned in the shastras and the Vedas, and skilled in the use of weapons. His radiance put the sun to shame. Indradyumna was devoted to Vishnu. He once decided that he would worship Vishnu. A tirtha is a sacred place of pilgrimage. Indradyumna scanned all the existing tirthas and cities. But none of them satisfied him. None of them, he felt, was appropriate as a place for worshipping Vishnu.

Indradyumna's own capital was the city of Avanti, in the kingdom of Malva. Avanti was a beautiful and wealthy city, surrounded on all sides by moats and other fortifications. Traders from many countries came there with all sorts or commodities for trading. The roads of the city were lined with shopes. The houses were painted white. The king's stables were full of horses and elephants. All citizens of Avanti were pleasant of appearance and happy. Sacrifices were held fairly often. Many were the temples, groves and ponds in Avanti. Any tree that grew on earth could be found there.

There was a temple to Shiva in the city. This was known as the temple of Mahakala. The image there was so sacred that worshipping Shiva in the temple of Mahakala was tantamount to performing one thousand ashvamedha yajnas.

The river Shipra flowed past Avanti. On the banks of the river there was a temple of Vishnu known as Govindasvami. Another temple to Vishnu was named Vikramasvami. But Indradyumna was not satisfied with these temples. He wanted to build another temple to Vishnu. He left Avanti to look for a proper place. His soldiers and subjects accompanied their king, so that it looked as if the entire city of Avanti was on the march. After traveling for many days, they arrived on the shores of the southern ocean, the ocean that is known as lavana samudra.

There were so many waves in the ocean that the ocean itself seemed to be dancing. Marine animals lived in the ocean and the waters were also the source of all sorts of jewels. Indradyumna began to live on the shores of the ocean. He discovered a place near the ocean that was thick with flower and fruit trees. Many types of birds gathered there to eat the fruit. This was the place known as Purushaottama kshetra (place), the city of Puri of modern times.

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Indradyumna told the assembled kings, "I wish to accomplish two difficult tasks. The first is to perform an ashvamedha yajna here. And the second is to build a temple to Vishnu. Both of these are difficult jobs, particularly the second. But if you help me, I am confident that both jobs

can be done."

The kings agreed to help. They offered jewels, wealth, gold, clothes, food grains and other objects. The place where the yajna was to be held was made entirely out of gold. In fact, all the objects used in the yajna were made out of gold. Brahmanas from all over Jambudvipa came to witness the sacrifice. They were donated elephants, horses and cows as alms. Never has there been any other sacrifice to rival the one that Indradyumna performed. After the sacrifice was over and the temple built, there remained the more important question of the image. How was this to be made? Indradyumna began to pray to Vishnu for guidance.

Vishnu appeared before Indradyumna in a dream and said, "Why are you so miserable? When the sun rises, go to the shores of the ocean. There you will find a tree. Half of the tree is in the water and the remaining half in the sand. Chop down this tree. It s wood will give you the material for the image.

In the morning, Indradyumna went to the seashore and found the tree. It was just as Vishnu had described it to be. With an axe, he chopped down the tree. As he was about to slice the trunk in two, two brahmanas appeared before him. Although Indradyumna did not know it, these two brahmanas were Vishnu and Vishvakarma in disguise.

"King. What have you done?" exclaimed the brahmanas. "You have cut down the only tree that was on the shores of the ocean."

"Forgive me," replied Indradyumna. "I wished to make an image of Vishnu. Vishnu has instructed me in a dream that this is the tree from which the image should be made."

"That is an excellent idea," said the brahmana who was Vishnu in disguise. "There is nothing so holy as praying to Vishnu. Meet my companion. He is as skilled as the great Vishvakarma himself. If you want, he will build the image for you."

King Indradyumna agreed. And instructed by Vishnu, Vishvakarma started to build the image. Or, to be more accurate, there were three different images. The first one was that of Baladeva or Balarama. This was completely white in colour, except for the eyes, which were red. The

image was dressed in blue and a snake held its hood over Balarama's head. A club and a mace were in Balarama's hands. The second image was Krishna's. This was blue in colour, with eyes like lotus flowers. The image was dressed in yellow and had a chakra in its hand. The third image was that of Krishna's sister Subhadra. This image was golden in colour and was dressed in wonderful clothes.

When Indradyumna discovered that the images were made in a matter of minutes, he was thunderstruck. He realised that the two brahmanas cold not be mere mortals. He fell at their feet and said, "Please tell me who you are. You cannot be humans."

Vishnu and Vishvakarma then revealed their true selves and Indradyumna was thrilled. Vishnu blessed the king and told him that he would rule for ten thousand and nine hundred years. And even after Indradyumna died, a place would be reserved for him in heaven. On an auspicious day, the three images were instated in the temple.

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Markandeya

Many years ago, a great destruction (Pralaya) took place. The earth was shrouded in darkness and nothing could be seen. There was neither sun

nor moon. Lightning and thunder crushed mountains and trees. There were showers of meteors. Lakes and rivers dried up. The entire earth burnt with fire and the flames of the fire reached down to the underworld. All living beings perished in this fire, including the gods and the demons.

There was a sage named Markandeya. While all this was going on, Markandeya was busy meditating. Such was the power of Markandeya's tapasya that the fire dared not touch him. But it is also true that Markandeya was scared of the fire that raged all around him. He suffered from hunger and thirst and forgot all about his tapasya. His lips and throat dried up from fear. Markandeya discovered that there was a banyan tree that was untouched by all these ravages. He retired to the shade of the banyan tree and started to pray to Vishnu.

Clouds gathered in the sky. They were thick and dark clouds and they spread all over the earth. It started to rain and it poured and poured. Water was everywhere and the earth was flooded. The water put out the fire. It rained continuously for twelve years. The oceans flooded the shores and the mountains were pulverised. Vishnu slept on the water.

Markandeya did not know what to do. There was water everywhere and he floated on it. But he continued to pray to Vishnu.

Vishnu spoke to Markandeya. "Do not be frightened, Markandeya," he said. "You are devoted to me and I shall protect you."

Markandeya did not realise that it was Vishnu who was speaking. "Who dares to address me thus?" he demanded. "Am I a child that I should be so addressed? I am the great Markandeya, blessed by Brahma himself."

But try as he might, Markandeya cold not see anyone anywhere. Where had the voice come from then? Had it all been an illusion? Not knowing what to do, he started to pray again to Vishnu. Suddenly he saw the banyan tree floating on the water. A golden bed was spread on the branches of the tree and on the bed there slept a small boy. Markandeya was exceedingly surprised to see the small boy floating in the middle of this deluge. He was so confused by his illusions that he did not realise that this boy was none other than Vishnu.

The boy spoke to Markandeya. "You are tired," said the boy. "You are looking for a refuge. Enter my body and rest for some time."

Markandeya was so confused that, before he could react, he entered the boy's body through the mouth. Inside the boy's stomach Markandeya discovered all the worlds, the seven regions and the seven oceans. The mountains and the kingdoms were all there. So were all living beings.

Markandeya did not know what to make of all this. He started to pray to Vishnu. No sooner than he had started, he came out of the boy's mouth. Vishnu now appeared before him and blessed him. The sage spent a thousand years with Vishnu. Vishnu then asked, "I wish to grant you a boon. What is your desire?"

"I want to build a temple to Shiva in Purushaottama Kshetra," replied Markandeya. "This will prove to everyone that Vishnu and Shiva are really one and the same."

Vishnu granted the boon and Markandeya built a temple to Shiva known as Bhuvaneshvara (Lord of the World).

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King Shveta

In Satya Yuga there used to be a king named Shveta. He was such a good king that during his reign people lived for ten thousand years. No one

dies as a child. Longevity was high and there was no infant mortality.

But there was a sage named Kapalagoutama. Unfortunately, the sage's son died as an infant. The sage brought the dead body to Shveta and the king resolved that if he could not bring the sage's son back to life within a week, he would immolate himself in a fire. Having thus taken an oath, king Shveta worshipped Shiva with one thousand and one hundred blue lotus flowers. Shiva appeared before the king and granted the boon that the infant son might be brought back to life.

King Shveta ruled for a thousand years. He also built a temple to Vishnu in Purushaottama kshetra. The temple that had been built by Indradyumna was known as the temple of Jagannatha. Shveta's temple was not very far from this and was known as the temple of Shvetamadhava. The image in this temple was as white as the moon.

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Bali

There was a king of the daityas named Bali. He was powerful and invincible. He was also righteous and truthful. The gods cold not bear to

see Bali's prosperity and began to plot how Bali might be foiled. So well did Bali rule that disease, drought and evil disappeared throughout the three worlds.

In desperation, the gods approached Vishnu. "Please do something about Bali", they requested. "You always help us out when we are in trouble".

"There is no difference between Bali and the gods so far as I am concerned," replied Vishnu "Bali is devoted to me. I cannot therefore fight with him. But I will think of a way so that his kingdom might be taken away from him and given to you."

Vishnu decided to be bom as Aditi's son. The son was a dwarf. This was the Vamana avatara (dwarf incarnation) of Vishnu.

Bali proposed to organise a horse sacrifice. Many sages came to the sacrifice and Shukracharya was the chief priest. The dwarf also arrived to witness the yajna.

Shukracharya realised that the dwarf was none other than Vishnu. He told Bali, "I suspect that this dwarf is Vishnu in disguise. He must have come here to ask you for something. Please do not grant him anything without first consulting me."

"Certainly not," replied Bali. "It is good fortune indeed that the great Vishnu has come to my house. What is there to consult about? I shall grant Vishnu whatever he wants."

Bali went to the dwarf to ascertain what the dwarf wanted. Vishnu expressed the wish that he might be given as much of land as might be covered in three of the dwarfs steps. This boon Bali readily granted. But no sooner than the boon had been granted, the dwarf adopted a gigantic form. He placed one foot on Bali's yajna and the second on Brahmaloka.

"Where will I place my third step?" demanded Vishnu. There is no more space left in the entire universe. Find me a place for my third step."

Bali smiled and said, "Place it on my back."

Vishnu was charmed at Bali's generosity. He granted Bali the boon that

Bali would hold the title of Indra in a future manvantara. He then appointed Bali king of the underworld. But Indra's kingdom of heaven, which Bali had conquered, was returned to Indra.

Brahma had all this while been in Brahmaloka. When Vishnu placed his second foot on Brahmaloka, Brahma felt that he should welcome his water-pot (kamandalu) to wash the foot. The water spilled over from the foot and fell on the mountains. There the water divided into four. Vishnu accepted the flow that went northwards. The flow that went westwards returned to Brahma's kamandalu. The flow that went eastwards was gathered up by the gods and the sages. But the flow that went southwards got entangled in Shiva's matted hair. This water was the river Ganga.

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Goutama

Part of the water of the Ganga that got stuck in Shiva's hair was brought down to earth by Bhagiratha. The remaining part was brought down by

the sage Goutama.

Parvati was married to Shiva, but Shiva seemed to be fonder of Ganga than of Parvati. Parvati resolved that a way had to be found to remove Ganga from Shiva's hair. She tried persuasion, but Shiva refused to listen.

At this time, there was a terrible drought on earth which went on for fourteen years. The only place that was not affected by the drought was the sage Gouthama's hermitage. Other people also gathered in the hermitage to save themselves from the drought and Goutama welcomed them all. Ganesha thought that he might be able to devise a way to free his mother of the Ganga problem. He went and began to live in Gouthama's hermitage.

Ganesha cultivated the acquaintance of the other sages and become quite friendly with them. One of Parvati's companions was Jaya. Ganesha told Jaya that she was to adopt the form of a cow and eat up the grain in Goutama's fields. And the moment she was struck, she was to lie down on the ground and pretend to be dead.

Goutama noticed that a cow was eating up his grain. He tried to drive away the cow by striking it with a blade of grass. As soon as he did this, the cow uttered a Srill bellow and fell down on the ground. Ganesha and the other sages came running to see what had happened. They discovered that, to all intents and purposes, a cow had been struck down dead by sage Goutama. They therefore refused to stay in an ashrama where such a sin had been committed.

Goutama tried to restrain them. "Please do not go away and forsake me," he said. "Tell me how I may performed penance."

"You will have to bring down Ganga from Shiva's hair," replied Ganesh. "When that water touches the dead body of the cow, your sin will be forgiven."

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The Doves

In a mountain known as Brahmagiri there used to live a hunter who was very cruel. He not only killed birds and animals, but brahmanas and

sages as well.

The hunter once went on a hunt. He killed many animals and birds and some he put in his cages. He had penetrated so far inside the forest that he was far from home. It became night and also started to rain. Hungry and thirsty, the hunter lost his way. He climbed up a tree and decided to spend the night there. But his mind kept going back to his wife and children at home.

For many years a dove and its family had lived happily on that tree. Both the male and female had gone out to look for food. But although the make dove had returned to the nest, the female dove had not. In fact, the female had been captured by the hunter and was now inside a cage. The male did not know this. He mourned for his wife.

These words of mourning were heard by the female dove inside the cage and she made her presence felt. The male dove came down and discovered his wife inside the cage. "The hunter is sleeping now, " he said. "Now is the time for me to free you."

"No," replied the female dove. "You know how it is with living beings. One living being lives on another. I can find not fault with the hunter, he is merely collecting his food. He is like a guest to us. And it is our duty to offer up our bodies for the sake of a guest."

"You are quite right," said the male dove. "I lost my sense of propriety. We have to serve our guest. But how do we serve our guest? We have nothing that we can call our own."

"At the moment the hunter is suffering most from the cold," replied the female dove. "We have to light a fire to warm him up. Go and find a fire and bring plenty of dead leaves and branches so that the fire may bum."

The male dove found a flaming branch. He also brought many dry leaves and branches so that the fire could burn. The rain had stopped and the fire warmed up the hunter.

"Now," said the female dove, "free me so that I may immolate myself in the fire. My roasted flesh will serve as food for the hunter."

"Never," replied the male dove. "It is my right to serve the guestfirst".

Saying this, the male dove hurled himself into the fire. The hunter had heard the entire conversation and marveled that two doves could be so altruistic. The female dove now requested the hunter to free her from the cage. And as soon as he did this, the female dove also hurled herself into the fire.

This selfless deed of the two doves was so wonderful that a space vehicle (Vimana) came down to take the two doves straight to heaven. The cruel hunter was also impressed and repented his past misdeeds. He told the doves, "You are indeed blessed. Before you go to heaven, please tell me how I may perform penance for my sins."

"Go to Goutami Ganga and bathe there for fifteen days," replied the doves. "Your sins will also be forgiven."

The hunter did as he had been asked to. The place where the doves immolated themselves became a holy tirtha known as kapotatirtha, since the word kapota means dove.

The Doves

In a mountain known as Brahmagiri there used to live a hunter who was very cruel. He not only killed birds and animals, but brahmanas and sages as well.

The hunter once went on a hunt. He killed many animals and birds and some he put in his cages. He had penetrated so far inside the forest that he was far from home. It became night and also started to rain. Hungry and thirsty, the hunter lost his way. He climbed up a tree and decided to spend the night there. But his mind kept going back to his wife and children at home.

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Garuda and Maninaga

You have already been told about the great snake (naga) Ananta. Ananta had a son named Maninaga. Garuda was the enemy of the snakes and the

snakes were all afraid of Garuda.

Maninaga began to pray to Shiva. Having pleased Shiva, he obtained the boon that Garuda would be able to do him no harm. Armed with this boon, Maninaga started to wander around freely and did not run away even when faced with Garuda. Garuda found this to be exceedingly strange. Although he could not kill Maninaga, he captured him and kept him imprisoned in his own house.

Shiva had a companion named Nandi. Nandi told Shiva, "Lord, what has happened to Maninaga? We have not seen him for some time. I hope that Garuda has not done him some harm."

Shiva of curse knew what had happened. He advised Nandi to pray to Vishnu. Nandi was to please Vishnu and then ask for the boon that Maninaga might be freed from Garuda's imprisonment. Nandi did this and Vishnu asked Garuda to release Maninaga.

"Lord," Garuda told Vishnu, "this is very unfair. Other masters treat their servants really well. They give their servants gifts. See how Shiva has sent Nandi himself to rescue Shiva's devotee Maninaga. You never give me any gifts. Moreover, when I obtain something on my own, you ask me to relinquish it. Is this proper on your part? It is on me that you ride when you go out to fight the demons. They get defeated because of my prowess. And yet it tickles your ego no end to think that you have defeated them yourself."

Vishnu smiled and replied, "Garuda, you are quite right. You have become thin and learn from bearing my weight. It is quite true that I can defeat the demons only because of your prowess. You have a lot of strength. Why don't you bear the weight of my little finger and demonstrate your strength?"

Vishnu placed his little finger on Garuda's head. So heavy was the finger that Garuda was crushed against the ground.

"Please forgive me, said" Garuda. "I have been very stupid. I am an ignorant ass and you are the lord of everything. I have been completely flattened by the weight of your little finger. Please tell me how I may regain my old self."

Vishnu asked Nandi to take Garuda to Shiva. Shiva would find a way of restoring Garuda's old appearance. Maninaga was released and Nandi took Garuda to Shiva. Shiva asked Garuda to bathe in Goutami Ganga. This would make his appearance normal again.

Garuda did this. Not only was his old appearance restored, he became stronger and swifter than he used to be. The place where Garuda bathed is a tirtha known as Garudatirtha.

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Vishvamitra and Indra

Many years ago, there was a terrible drought. There was no food to be had. The sage Vishvamitra had come to the banks of the river Goutami

Ganga with his disciples. Vishvamitra's wife, children and disciples were all hungry. The sage therefore sent his disciples out to look for food. They searched everywhere, but could find no food. The only object that they could find was the body of a dead dog. They brought this to Vishvamitra.

"We have no choice," Vishvamitra told his disciples. "Clean the meat carefully with water. Then offer it to the gods, the sages and the ancestors. This is what we have to live on."

Offering the meat of a dog to the gods was unheard of. Indra adopted the form of a hawk and stole the vessel in which the meat was kept. But Vishvamitra got to know about this and got ready to curse Indra. Indra was naturally scared of Vishvamitra's curse. He changed the dog-meat into amrita (a heavenly drink) and brought the vessel back.

"I don't want amrita," Vishvamitra told Indra. "Bring the dog-meat back. I don't want to have amrita when the whole world is starving for food. There is no food available and I do not see any sin in eating dog-meat. Nor should there be a sin in offering it to the gods."

Indra was the god of rains. He realised that the only way to persuade Vishvamitra against eating the dog-meat was to make it rain so that there would be an end to the drought. Instructed by Indra, the clouds poured down rain. Vishvamitra and his disciples now consented to partake of the amrita.

The place where all this happened has come to be known as Vishvamitratirtha.

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Shveta

There used to be a brahmana named Shveta. He was a friend of the sage Goutama and had a hermitage on the banks of the Goutami Ganga.

Shveta was also devoted to Shiva. In due course, Shiveta died and Yama's messengers arrived to take Shveta to Yama. But they could not even enter Shiveta's house.

Finding that Yama's messengers ere not returning, Yama's companion Chitraka told Yama, "What do you think has happened? Why aren't the messengers returning?

Yama now sent his companion Mrityu (literally death) to find out what was going on. Mrityu went to Shveta's house and found Yama's messengers standing outside the house. They explained that they were unable to enter the house because Shiva himself was guarding Shveta's body. One of Shiva's companions asked Mrityu. "What are you doing here? What do you want?"

"I have come to take Shveta to Yama," replied Mrityu. "His time on earth is up."

Mrityu flung a noose to grasp Shveta's body. But Shiva's companion struck Mrityu with a rod and killed him. When the news of this was taken to Yama, he was furious. With all his companions he attacked Shveta's house. Nandi, Ganesha, Kartikeya and several of Shiva's companions came to fight on Shiva's side, and a battle royal raged. All the gods arrived to mediate and end the strife. Things had a got a bit out of hand and Yama himself had been killed by Kartikeya.

The problem seemed to defy solution. Yama was, after all, performing his duty. But Shiva insisted that his devotees would never be taken to Yama, but would instead go straight to heaven. Shiva's condition was finally agreed to. Nandi brought water from the Goutami Ganga and sprinkled it on Yama and the others who had died in the fighting. They were all immediately brought back to life.

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Kubera

Kubera was the eldest son of the sage Vishrava. Vishrava had two wives. The fist wife give birth to Kubera. The second wife was a rakshasa

(demon) woman and gave birth to Ravana, Kumbhakama and Vibhishana. Kubera used to rule in Lanka and his relations with his cousins were extremely good. But Ravana's mother did not like idea of her sons mixing so much with Kubera.

She called her sons and said, "What are you up to? Why do you cause me so much of pain? You are demons and Kubera is a god. Is it proper that you should be so friendly with him? The relation between gods and demons is one of enmity. Consider Kubera's pomp and glory. Have you got anything like that to show for yourselves? Do something so as to improve your own statures." Thus instructed by their mother, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana went off to the forest to perform tapasya. They pleased Brahma with their prayers and desired the boon that they might win over the kingdom of Lanka. Ravana also obtained the boon that he would become very strong.

Thus fortified with the boons, the demons attacked Kubera and defeated him. They drove Kubera out of Lanka. Kubera possessed a beautiful Vimana named pushpaka. This was also appropriated by Ravana. Ravana also made it known that whoever gave Kubera refuge would be killed by him. This meant that no one dared give refuge to Kubera.

Kubera sought the advice of his grandfather Pulastya. Pulastya told him to go to the banks of the Goutami Ganga and pray to Shiva there. Shiva appeared before Kubera and blessed him with the boon that Kubera would become the god of all wealth.

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Harishchandra

In the Ikshvaku dynasty there ruled a king named Harishchandra. Harishchandra had no son. One day two sages named Narada and

Parvata came to visit Harishchandra and told him that he would go to hell if he did not have a son.

"How can I obtain a son?" asked Harishchandra.

"Go to the banks of the Goutami Ganga," advised the sages. "Pray to the god Varuna there. We are sure that Varuna will grant you a son."

Harishchandra pleased Varuna with his prayers and asked for a son.

"You will have a son," said Varuna. "But there is a condition attached. You will have to subsequently organise a yajna in my honor and you will have to sacrifice your son at this yajna. Tell me if this condition is acceptable to you."

"Yes indeed," replied Harishchandra.

In due course, Harishchandra had a son who was named Rohita.

Varuna came to Harishchandra and asked, "What about the yajna in my honor?"

"My son is still too young," replied Harishchandra. "Let him at least attain ten days of age. Till then, the baby is in any case impure and is not fit to be sacrificed."

After ten days Varuna came again and asked, "What about the yajna in my honor?

"Please let him grow his teeth," replied Harishchandra. "Animals are sacrificed at yajnas. And no one becomes an animal until he actually has teeth."

Varuna waited till the teeth grew and returned when Rohita was seven years of age. "What about the yajna in my honor?" he asked.

"These are only milk teeth," replied Harishchandra. "These do not characterise an animal. Please wait until his proper teeth have grown."

Varuna returned when the proper teeth grew and asked, "What about the

yajna in my honor?"

"He is the son of kshatriya (the second of the four classes, a warrior class)," replied Harishchandra. "But his training in the art of fighting has not even begun. He cannot be called a kshatriya until he knows how to fight. Till that day he is an incomplete man. Do you really want such an incomplete man as a sacrifice?"

After some years had passed, Rohita became skilled in the art of fighting and was appointed the heir-apparent (yuvaraja) to the kingdom. He was then sixteen years of age.

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This time the entire conversation took place in front of the prince and Rohita intervened before Harishchandra could say anything. "Father," he said, "I have already resolved to perform a yajna in Vishnu's honor. Grant me the permission to complete that first. After that, do what you will."

Rohita went off to the forest. Meanwhile, Varuna had had enough and he afflicted Harishchandra with a painful stomach ailment. News of his father's illness was taken to Rohita in the forest. In the forest, Rohita met a sage named Ajigarta. The sage was very poor and, together with his wife and three sons, was starving.

"Will you sell one of your three sons to me?" asked Rohita. "The boy is needed for a sacrifice."

"I shall not sell my eldest son," said the sage. "My wife will not permit the youngest one to be sold. You can have the one in the middle. His name is Shunahshepa. The price will be one thousand cows, one thousand golden coins, one thousand pieces of clothing and a lot of wealth." Rohita paid the price and brought Shunahshepa home to Harishchandra.

"We can't do this," said Harishchandra. "It is the duty of kings to protect the brahmanas. How can we sacrifice the son of a brahmana? It is better to die instead. Go and return Shunahshepa to his father."

Just then a divine voice was heard from heaven. The voice said, "There is no need for anyone to die. Take Shunahshepa to the banks of the Goutami Ganga and perform the yajna to Varuna there. Goutami Ganga is such a sacred river that no human sacrifices are needed if a yajna is performed there.

This is what Harishchandra did not Varuna was satisfied. As for Shunahshepa, he was adopted by the sage Vishvamitra as a son.

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Vriddhagoutama

The sage Goutama had a son named Vriddhagoutama. Vriddhagoutama was also a sage. But he was very ugly. Besides, he had no nose; had never

had one since he had been born. He was so ashamed of this deformity that he could not bear to join the other children of the sages in studying the Vedas and Shastras under a teacher. But Vriddhagoutama knew some incantations (mantras) which he always chanted. He also worshipped the god Agni.

When he grew a bit older, Vriddhagoutama went out to tour the world. He traveled to many places and met many people. Since he was deformed, he never got married. Who would want to marry a person so ugly as he?

In the course of his travels, Vriddhagoutama arrived at a mountain named Shitagiri. He discovered a beautiful cave in the mountain and thought that this might be a good place to live in. So he entered the cave and was very surprised to find an old woman inside. The old woman had obviously been living inside the cave for many years. Her body was thin and wasted from the rigours of severe tapasya.

Vriddhagoutama was about to touch the feet of such a venerable old woman, but the woman restrained him. "Please don't touch my feet," said the woman. "You are my guru. Does a guru ever bow before his disciple?"

Vriddagoutama was surprised at these words. This was the first time in his life that he had met the old woman. "How can I be your guru?", he asked. "You are much older than me. Besides, I have never learnt anything and you are clearly a respected ascetic. Your words are a complete mystery to me."

"Let me tell you my story," said the old woman. "Otherwise, you will not understand."

There used to be a handsome and brave prince named Ritadhvaja. He was the son of King Arshtishena. Ritadhvaja went on a hunt to the forest and arrived at that very cave. There he happened to meet an apsara named Sushyama. The two fell in love with each other and got married. But eventually, Ritadhvaja had to return home and Sushyama gave birth to a daughter there. Sushyama left her daughter in the cave itself with the instruction that she was not to leave the cave. The first man to enter the cave would become her husband. It was this daughter who had now

become the old woman. Ritadhvaja had reigned for eighty thousand years. After that, ritadhvaja's son had reigned for ten thousand years. All this while, Sushyama's daughter had lived in the cave, that is, for ninety thousand years all together.

"Now you see that you are to be my husband," said the old woman. "Is a husband not a guru?"

"What you say is quite impossible," replied Vriddhagoutama. "You are much older than me. I am only a thousand years old and you more than ninety thousand. How can we marry? I am like a child next to you."

"If you do not marry me, I will kill myself," said the old woman.

"But I am ugly," protested Vriddhagoutama. "I will promise you this much. If I every become handsome and learned, I will indeed marry you."

Vriddhagoutama

The sage Goutama had a son named Vriddhagoutama. Vriddhagoutama was also a sage. But he was very ugly. Besides, he had no nose; had never had one since he had been born. He was so ashamed of this deformity that he could not bear to join the other children of the sages in studying the Vedas and Shastras under a teacher. But Vriddhagoutama knew some incantations (mantras) which he always chanted. He also worshipped the god Agni.

When he grew a bit older, Vriddhagoutama went out to tour the world. He traveled to many places and met many people. Since he was deformed, he never got married. Who would want to marry a person so ugly as he?

In the course of his travels, Vriddhagoutama arrived at a mountain named Shitagiri. He discovered a beautiful cave in the mountain and thought that this might be a good place to live in. So he entered the cave and was very surprised to find an old woman inside. The old woman had obviously been living inside the cave for many years. Her body was thin and wasted from the rigours of severe tapasya.

Vriddhagoutama was about to touch the feet of such a venerable old woman, but the woman restrained him. "Please don't touch my feet," said the woman. "You are my guru. Does a guru ever bow before his disciple?"

Vriddagoutama was surprised at these words. This was the first time in his life that he had met the old woman. "How can I be your guru?", he asked. "You are much older than me. Besides, I have never learnt anything and you are clearly a respected ascetic. Your words are a complete mystery to me."

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"I have pleased the goddess Sarasvati, who presides over all learning, through my tapasya," said the old woman. "She will make you learned. I have also pleased the god Varuna and he will make you handsome."

Vriddhagoutama became handsome and learned and married the old woman. They lived happily in the cave.

One day, various sages came to visit the couple. Amongst them there were sages like Vashishtha and Vamadeva. But there were also young sages who ere not all that sensible. The younger sages started to laugh at the sight of the young and handsome Vriddhagoutama and his aged wife.

"Who is this man?" they asked the old woman. "Is he your son or your grandson?"

The sages went away, but the couple felt ashamed. They asked the sage Agastya what they might do. Agastya told them to go and bathe in the river Goutami Ganga. The river is so sacred that all one's heart's desires are thereby granted. The couple did this and prayed to Vishnu and Shiva. Wonder of wonders, the old woman became young and pretty. The place on the banks of the river where these wonderful things happened is a tirtha named Vriddhasangama.

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Pippalada

Many years ago, there used to be a sage named Dadhici. His wife was Lopamudra. Dadhichi's hermitage was right next to the holy river Ganga.

Lopamudra's sister Gabhastini also used to live in the hermitage. Such was the sage Dadhichi's powers that daityas and danavas dared not set foot inside the hermitage.

The gods once fought with the demons and managed to defeat them. After the war was over, they came to pay their respects to Dadhichi. Dadhichi welcomed his guests and wanted to know how they were faring.

"Thanks to your blessings, we are fine," replied the gods. "We have just defeated the demons in a war. In fact, we have a slight problem. We no longer need our weapons now that the demons have run away. We don't know of a safe place where we can store all these weapons. We were wondering if we might keep the weapons in your ashrama. This is one of the safest places that can be found."

Dadhichi consented to this proposal. The gods left their weapons in the hermitage and went back to heaven.

When Lopamudra heard what Dadhichi had done, she was not at all pleased. "You have done something that is mot improper," she told her husband, "one should never accept responsibility for someone else's property, especially if one is an ascetic and has not material possessions of one's own. Moreover, you have agreed to store the weapons of the gods. Dose this not mean that those who are the god's enemies will look upon you too as an enemy? And what are you going to do if something should happen to the weapons? Will the gods not blame you then?"

"Your points are well taken," said Dadhichi. "But I had not thought of them and I have given the gods my word. I can't very well go back on my wordnow."

A hundred years passed. The gods did not return to collect their weapons. The weapons began to lose their luster, Dadhichi did not know how the energy of the weapons might be preserved. He washed them with holy water and the energy of the weapons got dissolve in the water. Dadhichi then drank up the water. As for the weapons themselves, they faded away once their energy was gone.

Finally the gods came to claim their weapons. "Can we have our weapons back? They asked.

"Our enemies have become powerful again. We need our weapons."

"That may be," said Dadhichi. "But the weapons are no longer there. I have swallowed up their energy. Let me tell you what can be done. I will use the powers of meditation (yoga) to give up my life. Then excellent weapons can be made out of my bones.

The gods were reluctant, but thee was no other solution. Dadhichi died and the gods requested Vishvakarma to make weapons for them out of Dadhichi's bones. Vishvakarma complied and the weapon name vajra that he made was truly remarkable.

Lopamudra was away when this incident took place. She returned and found that her husband had died. She was afflicted with sorrow and wished to immolate herself in a fire. But she happened to be pregnant at the time, so that this could not immediately be done. Once the baby was bom, she killed herself after having handed over the baby to a pippala (fig) tree forrearing.

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Since the pippala tree brought up the boy, he came to be known as Pippalada. Chandra was the lord over all trees. The trees asked Chandra for some amrita for Pippalada and Chandra obliged. The amrita gave Pippalada a lot of strength.

When Pippalada grew up, he wanted to know who his parents were and the trees told him the story. Pippalada blamed the gods for his parents death and decided to seek revenge. The trees brought Pippalada to Chandra.

"You are still too young," said Chandra. "First you must become learned and well-versed in the use of weapons. Go to the forest of dandakaranya. The river Goutami Ganga flows through that forest. Pray to Shiva there and I am sure that your wishes will be fulfilled."

Pippalada pleased Shiva through his prayers.

"What boon do you desire?" asked Shiva.

I want the boon that I may be able to destroy the gods," replied Pippalada.

"I have a third eye in the middle of my forehead," said Shiva. "The day you can see my third eye, your wish will be granted."

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Try as he might, Pippalada could not see Shiva's third eye. Pippalada therefore performed even more difficult tapasya for even more years. Eventually he managed to see Shiva's third eye. From Shiva's third eye was born a demon that looked like a mare.

"What is your desire?" asked the demon of Pippalada.

"Kill my enemies, the gods," was the reply.

The demon immediately attacked Pippalada.

"What are you doing?" asked Pippalada. "Why are you trying to kill me? I asked you to kill the gods."

"But your body has bee created by the gods," replied the demon. "I will therefore kill you also."

Pippalada ran to Shiva for deliverance. Shiva earmarked a region inside the forest for Pippalada. There the demon was not permitted to enter. Pippalada lived there, protected from the ravages of the demon. Meanwhile, the gods requested Shiva to save them as well. Shiva persuaded Pippalada to control his anger. He convinced Pippalada that nothing was to be gained by killing the gods. That would not bring his parents back.

Pippalada agreed. But he wished to see his parents once. Accordingly, Vimana descended from heaven on which Dadhichi and Lopamudra were seated. They blessed Pippalada and asked him to marry and have children.

As for the demon, it became a river and merged with the holy Ganga.

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Nageshvara

There was a city named Pratishthana. A king named Shurasena ruled in that city. Shurasena did not have any sons. After a lot of effort, a son was

born to him. But the son happened to be a snake. The king and the queen were mortified at this turn of events. But they brought up their son in great secrecy. Not even the king's ministers and priests knew that the prince was a snake.

When the prince grew slightly, he began to talk like a human, even though he was a snake. King Shurasena arranged for the prince's education. After the snake had become learned in the knowledge of the Vedas, he told his father, "Father, it is time for me to get married. If I do not have a son, I am certain to go to naraka."

King Shurasena was very surprised to hear this. "How is that possible?" he asked. "Which princess will consent to marry a snake?"

"I don't know," replied the prince. "But I do know that I have to get married. Other wise, I will commit suicide. There are many forms of marriage that are permissible. Perhaps a princess can be kidnapped and married to me."

Shurasena called his ministers and told them, "My son Nageshvara has now come of age. He has also been made the heir-apparent to the kingdom. There is no one equal to him in bravery on earth, in heaven or in the underworld. I am getting old. Please arrange for Nageshvara to get married. I shall then relinquish my kingdom and retire to the forest."

The king did not of course tell his ministers that Nageshvara was a snake.

Shurasena had an aged minister. This minister reported that there was a king named Vijaya who ruled in the eastern part of the country. King Vijaya had eight sons and one daughter. The daughter's name was Bhogavati and she was very beautiful. She would be the right match for Nageshvara.

The aged minister was sent as a messenger to Vijaya and the king agreed to the match. There was a custom amongst kshatriyas that the bride did not always have to be married to the bridegroom in person. She could also be married to the bridegroom's sword or some other weapon. The minister explained to King Vijaya that there were some private reasons which made it impossible for Nageshvara to come in person for the marriage. Bhogavati should be married off to Nageshvara's sword. Vijaya

consented to this and the marriage ceremony was performed. The entire retinue then returned to the city of Pratishthana.

But what was to be done now that the marriage was over? Nageshvara's mother sent a made to Bhogavati. The maid was to tell Bhogavati that her husband was actually a snake and then observe her reaction.

The maid told Bhogavati, "Your husband is a god, but he has the form of a snake."

"That is my good fortune," replied Bhoavati. "Normally, women are married to men. I must have performed many good deeds in my earlier life to have been married to a god."

Bhogavati was then brought to Nageshvara and at the sight of Bhogavati, Nageshvara remembered his earlier life. He used to be a snake (naga) in his earlier life and was a companion of Shiva's. His wife in the earlier life was Bhogavati.

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There had bee an occasion when Shiva had laughed at a joke of parvati's and Nageshvara had also laughed. This had annoyed Shiva and he had cursed Nageshvara that he would be born on earth as the son of a human, but in the form of a snake. When he went and bathed in Goutami Ganga,

the period of the curse would be over. When Nageshvara recounted these incidents to Bhogavati, she also remembered her earlier life. The two went and bathed in the scared river and Nageshvara obtained a handsome and divine form. Nageshavara ruled after Shurasena's death. And when Nageshvara and Bhogavati died, they went back to Kailasa to live with Shiva.

On the banks of the Goutami Ganga, Nageshvara and Bhogavati built a temple to Shiva. This is a famous tirtha known as Nagatirtha.

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Brahma's Head

Years ago, there was a war between the gods and the demons and the gods lost. The gods came to Brahma for advice and Brahma asked them

to pray to Shiva.

When Shiva appeared before them, the gods said, "The demons have defeated us. Please kill them and save us."

Shiva went to fight with the demons. He drove the demons off from Mount Sumeru and out of heaven. He pursued them to the ends of the earth. All this exertion made Shiva sweat. And wherever the drops of sweat fell down on the ground, terrible ogresses named matris were created. The matris also started to kill the demons and pursued them down to the underworld.

While the matris were killing the demons in the underworld, Brahma and the other dos waited on the banks of the river Goutami Ganga. This place came to be known as Pratishthana.

When the matris had killed all the demons, they returned to earth and began to live on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. This tirtha has come to be known as matritirtha.

Brahma used to have five heads. The fifth head was in the shape of a donkey's head. When the demons were running away to the underworld, this donkey's head addressed the demons and said, "why are you running away? Come back and fight with the gods. I shall aid you in your fight."

The gods were alarmed at this paradoxical situation. Brahma was helping them in their flight with the demons and Brahma's fifth head was trying to help the demons. They went to Vishnu and said, "Please cut off Brahma's fifth head. It is causing too much of confusion."

"I can do what you want," replied Vishnu, "but there is a problem. When the cut-off head falls on earth, it will destroy the earth. I think you should pray to Shiva to find a way out."

The gods prayed to Shiva and Shiva agreed to cut off the head. But what was to be done with the severed head? The earth refused to bear it and so did the ocean. Finally it was decided that Shiva himself would bear the head.

The place where Shiva cut off Brahma's fifth head is known as

rudratirtha. Ever since that day, Brahma has had four heads and is known as Chaturmukha (chatur connotes four and mukha connotes face). There is a temple to Brahma on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. This is a holy place known as brahmatirtha. A killer of brahmanas is pardoned his sin if he visits this temple.

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The Owl and the Dove

A dove used to live on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. The dove's name was Anuhrada and its wife's name was Heti. Anuhrada was Yama's

grandson.

Not very far away, there lived an owl named Uluka. The owl's wife was called Uluki. The owls were descended from the god Agni.

The doves and the owls were enemies. They fought amongst themselves continually. The doves had received all sorts of weapons from Yama and the owls had received all sorts of weapons from Agni. These divine weapons threatened to bum up everything. But Yama and Agni intervened. They persuaded the owls and the doves to forget their enmity and live together as friends. The place where the doves lived came to be known as a tirtha named yamyatirtha. And the place where the owls lived came to be known as Agnitirtha.

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A dove used to live on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. The dove's name was Anuhrada and its wife's name was Heti. Anuhrada was Yama's grandson.

Not very far away, there lived an owl named Uluka. The owl's wife was called Uluki. The owls were descended from the god Agni.

The doves and the owls were enemies. They fought amongst themselves continually. The doves had received all sorts of weapons from Yama and the owls had received all sorts of weapons from Agni. These divine weapons threatened to burn up everything. But Yama and Agni intervened. They persuaded the owls and the doves to forget their enmity and live together as friends. The place where the doves lived came to be known as a tirtha named yamyatirtha. And the place where the owls lived came to be known as Agnitirtha.

The Hunter

There was a sage named Veda. He used to pray to Shiva every day. The prayers lasted till the afternoon and after the prayers were over, Veda

used to go to the nearby villages to beg alms.

A hunter named Bhilla used to come to the forest every afternoon to hunt. After the hunt was over, he used to come to Shiva's linga (image) and offer to Shiva whatever it was that he had hunted. In the process of doing this, he often moved Veda's offerings out of the way. Strange though it might seem, Shiva was stirred by Bhilla's offerings and eagerly used to wait for it every day. Bhilla and Veda never met. But Veda noticed that every day his offerings lay scattered and a little bit of meat lay by the side. Since this always happened when Veda had gone out to beg for alms, Veda did not know who was responsible. One day, he decided to wait in hiding so as to catch the culprit red-handed.

While Veda waited, Bhilla arrived and offered what he had brought to Shiva. Veda was amazed to discover that Shiva himself appeared before Bhilla and asked, "Why are you late today? I have been waiting for you. Did you get very tired?"

Bhilla went away after making his offerings. But Veda came up to Shiva and said, "What is all this? This is a cruel and evil hunter, and yet, you appear before him. I have been performing tapasya for so many years and you never appear before me. I am disgusted at this partiality. I will break your linga with this stone."

"Do it if you must," replied Shiva. "But please wait till tomorrow."

Next day, when Veda came to present his offerings, he found traces of blood on top of the linga. He carefully washed away the traces of blood and completed his prayers.

After some time, Bhilla also came to present his offerings and discovered traces of blood on top of the linga. He thought that he was in some way responsible for this and blamed himself for some unknown transgression. He picked up a sharp arrow and began to pierce his body repeatedly with this arrow as punishment.

Shiva appeared before both of them and said, "Now you see the difference between Veda and Bhilla. Veda has given me his offerings, but Bhilla has given me his whole soul. That is the difference between ritual and true devotion."

The place where Bhilla used to pray to Shiva is a famous tirtha known as bhillatirtha.

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Goutama and Manikundala

There was a city named Bhouvana. In that city there lived a brahmana named Goutama. The brahmana had a vaishya (trader and agriculture caste) friend named Manikundala.

Goutama's mother gave him a lot of ill advice. As a result of this, Goutama told Manikundala, "Let us go to other countries to trade and make profits."

"But my father has a lot of wealth," replied Manikundala. "What is the need to obtain more wealth?"

"You don't have the proper perspective," said Goutama. "A successful person is one who does not thrive on what is left to him by his father. He makes his own fortune."

Manikundala was convinced by Gountama's logic. He did not realise that his so-called friend was out to defraud him.

The two friends set out on their journey, Manikundala providing all the capital.

In the course of their travels Goutama remarked, "Have you noticed how those who follow the path of dharma (righteousness) always suffer? They are neither wealthy nor happy. There seems to be no point in being righteous."

"Please don't say that," protested manikundala. "Happiness lies in following the path of dharma. Poverty and misery are inevitable, they are of no account at all."

The two friends argued over this, but could not decide who was right. They resolved to have a bet. They would ask the opinions of others. And whoever lost the bet would surrender all his wealth to the winner. They asked many people for their opinions. Naturally most people said that it was the evil who thrived and prospered. And it was the righteous who suffered. The upshot of this was that Manikundala surrendered all his wealth to Goutama. But Manikundala continued to praise dharma.

"You are an utter ass," said Goutama. "Haven't you lost all your wealth to me? Yet you continue to praise dharma."

"The wealth is of no account at all," replied Manikundala. "Dharma is on my side and your apparent victory is only an illusion. Dharma will triumph in the end."

The two friends decided to have another bet. This time it was agreed that whoever lost the bet would have his two arms chopped off. They again asked several people and most people said that is was adharma (evil) which triumphed. So Manikundala lost his two arms.

"How does it feel now?" asked Goutama.

"The same as ever," replied Manikundala. "What is important is dharma. And dharma is on my side."

Goutama lost his temper at this. He threatened to cut off Manikundala's head if Manikundala

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persisted in his praise of dharma. But Manikundala was unperturbed. The friends decided to have another bet. This time it was agreed that whoever lost would forfeit his life. Manikundala lost yet again. And Goutama gouged out Manikundala's eyes and left him for dead.

Manikundala lay on the banks of the Goutami Ganga and pondered about the fate that had befallen him. It became night.

There was an image of Vishnu on the banks of the river and the rakshasa Vibhishana used to come there every night to pray to Vishnu. Vibhishana's son discovered Manikundala lying there and found out from him the entire story. He recounted the story to his father.

"Many years ago, I had joined Rama in his fight with Ravana," Vibhishana told his son. "Ragvana's son Meghanada shot a venomous arrow at Rama's brother Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell unconscious. The monkey Hanuman then went to the Himalayas and brought a mountain named Grandhamadana to Lanka. On that mountain there was a wonderful herb named vishalyakarani which cures all illnesses. When Hanuman returned the mountain to the Himalayas, a bit of the vishalyakarani fell down at this spot. Near Vishnu's image. Let us try and find it. We should be able to cure Manikundala."

Father and son hunted for the herb. The vishalyakarani had become a huge tree. They lopped off a branch and placed it on Manikundala's chest. Manikundala immediately regained his eyes and arms. After curing Manikundala, Vibhishana and his retinue returned to Lanka.

Manikundala began to travel. He eventually came to a city named Mahapura where a king named Maharaja ruled. Maharaja had no sons, only a daughter. The daughter was blind. Maharaja had announced that whoever cured his daughter would become his son-in-law and rule after him. Manikundala cured the princess with his knowledge of the vishalyakarani. He then married the princess and became king of Mahapura after Maharaja.

Many years later, Goutama was brought before Manikundala by the soldiers. He had been arrested on the charge of committing a crime. Goutama had lost all his wealth by then and was no more than a beggar. Manikundala pardoned his friend and shared with him whatever he had.

Such are the virtues of following the path of dharma. There are many tirthas along the banks of the Goutami Ganga where these wonderful incidents took place.

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Kandu

There was a sage named Kandu. He had a hermitage on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. The ashrama was a beautiful place and Kandu

performed very difficult tapasya there. In the summer Kandu meditated in the hot sun, in the monsoon he meditated on the wet ground, and in the winter he meditated dressed in wet clothing.

Indra got sacred as a result of all this tapasya. He thought that the sage Kandu might want to become Indra the king of the gods. He therefore called an apsara named disturb Kandu's tapasya."

Pramalocha went to the hermitage and began to sing there in a beautiful voice. This disturbed Kandu and he discovered a beautiful woman wandering around in his ashrama.

"Who are you?" Kandu asked the woman.

"I have come here to pluck flowers," replied Pramalocha. "I am your servant. I will do whatever you wish me to."

Kandu had fallen in love with Pramalocha and he married her. He forgot all about his tapasya and Indra heaved a sigh of relief. Years passed. Pramalocha wished to return to heaven, but Kandu would not let her.

After years and years had passed, Kandu came out of his hut, looking rather distracted. It was then evening and Kandu was obviously going somewhere.

"Where are you going?" Pramalocha asked.

"What a stupid question!" exclaimed Kandu. "Can't you see that it is now evening? I have got to go and observe the evening rites. The day has passed."

"What day?", asked Pramalocha. "Several days have passed and several evenings have come and gone."

"No, you came here this morning," said Kandu. "I brought you to my hut and it is now evening, I don't understand what you are trying to say. Explain yourself."

"It is true that I came here in the morning," answered Pramalocha. "But that was a morning which dawned many years ago. Hundreds of years

have passed since that day."

"How many years?" asked Kandu. "When did you come here?'

"Sixteen hundred years, six months and three days ago," replied Pramalocha.

"Are you sure?" asked Kandu. "It seems like a single day to me."

"I am sure," said Pramalocha. "I dare not lie to you."

"You have dislodged me from my tapasya," responded Kandu. "But I will not curse you, since

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you have been my wife. Go back to heaven. I have to atone for my sins.

The sage Kandu went to Purshottama kshetra and performed penance for his sins. He was blessed by Vishnu.

Kandu and Pramalocha had a daughter named Marisha.

The Brahma Purana also describes several other tirthas. Most of these are on the banks of the river Goutami Ganga. This is now identified as the river Godavari.

After describing these several tirthas, the text describes incidents in Krishna's life. These we will skip, since they are described in much greater detail in the other Puranas.

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VarnA Ashrama

There are four varnas (classes). Their names are brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya andshudra.

The duties of a brahmana are to donate alms, perform tapasya, worship the gods, perform yajnas and study the Vedas. To earn a living, brahmanas are authorized to teach and act as priests at sacrifices. The duties of kshatriya are to beat arms and protect the earth, donate alms and perform sacrifices. A kshatriya is also permitted to study the shastras. The duties of a vaishya are agriculture, animal husbandry and trade. That apart, vaishyas should donate alms, perform sacrifices and study the shastras. The duties of a shudra are to serve brahmanas. Shudras can also be shopkeepers and artisans.

In times of emergency, a brahmana is allowed to adopt the livelihoods of kshatriyas or vaishyas to earn a living. In similar fashion, a kshatriya is permitted to adopt the livelihoods of vaishyas or shudras and a vaishya is permitted to adopt the livelihoods of shudras.

There are four ashramas (stages of life) as well. The first of these is known as brahmacharya (celibate studenthood). During this period, the individual spends his days with his guru and studies the Vedas well. He has to serve his guru in proper fashion and live on alms. The next ashrama is that of Grihastha (householder stage). The individual now gets married and has children. He serves the gods, the sages, the ancestors and guests. It is householders who provide alms for sages and hermits. That is the reason why the householder stage is so very important. The third ashrama is known as vanaprastha (forest-dwelling stage). The individual now retires to the forest and withdraws his mind from the earthly life. He can leave his wife in the care of his sons or take her with him. He lives on roots, fruits and leaves and makes a bed for himself under the trees. He is not permitted to shave or cut his hair and his clothes have to be made out of bark or skins. The final ashrama is that of sannyasa (hermithood). A hermit gives up all association with the world and lives alone. He grows completely detached. He lives alone. He gets his food through begging. He is not permitted to spend more than one night in a village, or more than five nights at a time in a city.

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The Chandala and the Brahmarakshasa

A chandala is an outcast. On the outskirts of the city named Avanti lived a chandala. There was a temple of Vishnu in Avanti and the chandala was

devoted to Vishnu. He was also a good singer. Ekadashi tithi is the eleventh lunar day. Every month, on ekadashi tithi, the chandala would fast during the day. At night he would go to Vishnu's temple and sing praises of Vishnu. He never failed to observe this ritual.

The river Kshipra (Shipra) flowed by the city of Avanti. On one particular night, on ekadashi tithi, the chandala went to the banks of the river to collect some flowers for worshipping Vishnu. On the banks of the river there was a tree and on that tree there lived a brahmarakshasa (demon). As soon as the demon saw the chandala, it wished to devour him.

"Please not tonight," said the chandala. "I have to worship Vishnu throughout the night. Let me go now."

"Not on you life," replied the demon. "I have not eaten for ten days and I am famished. I can't let you go."

"Please, " said the chandala, "let me go. I promise that I will come back once the prayers are over. You will then be free to do with me as you will."

The demon let the chandala go. The chandala went to the temple. He worshipped Vishnu and spent the night in singing Vishnu's praises. Next day, he returned to the demon.

"I am indeed surprised," said the demon. "You are very truthful. You can't be a chandala. You must be a brahmana. Answer my questions. What did you do all night?"

"I stood outside Vishnu's temple and sang his praise," replied the chandala.

"For how long have you been doing this?" asked the demon.

"For twenty years," was the chandala's reply.

"You have acquired a lot of punya (store of merit) through this," said the demon. "Please grant me one night's punya, I am sinner."

"No," replied the chandala. "I will not part with my punya. I have given you my body, eat me if you will. But the punya is mine own."

"Very well then,' said the demon. "Give me two hours' worth of punya. I am a sinner."

"I have told you I will not give you any of my punya," replied the chandala. "But what is your sin?"

The brahmarakshasa related his story. His name was Somasharma and he was the son of Devasharma. Devasharma was a righteous brahmana. But Somasharma fell into evil ways. A brahmana is not authorised to act as a priest in a sacrifice before he has had his sacred-thread ceremony (upanayana). But Somasharma became a priest at a yajna even though his upanayana

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was freed.

What about the chandala? He returned home and then left for a tour of all the sacred places of pilgrimage. At one such tirtha. He remembered the story of his earlier life.

He used to be a hermit well-versed in the Vedas and the shastras. He used to beg alms for a living. Once he had obtained some alms. But some thieves were then in the process of stealing cows, and the hooves of the cows raised a cloud of dust. The dust fell onto the food and the hermit threw away the alms in disgust. Since he had thrown away alms, he was bom as a chandala. After performing penance for this sin, the chandala was pardoned.

had not been held. As a result of this sin, when he died, he became a demon. The chandala was stirred to pity at this sad story and parted with some of his punya. The demon was delighted and expressed his gratitude. He went to a tirtha and performed penance. Thus it was that the demon was freed.

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Yoga

The word yoga means union. Yoga is thus a form of meditation that unites the human soul (atman) with the divine soul (Paramatman), or

equivalently, with the divine essence (Brahman).

A practitioner of yoga has to study the Puranas, the Vedas and history He has to exercise restraint regarding the sort of food he eats. The best forms of food are yoghurt fruits, roots and milk. Yoga should be practiced in a place that is pleasant. It should not be too hot or too cold there. Nor should there be any noise to distract the practitioner.

Yoga has to be performed in a proper posture (asana). The practitioner concentrates the entire focus of his mind on the tip of his nose. He contemplates the form of brahmana. This can only be successful if one is detached and controls one's senses completely.

If yoga is performed properly, there comes the knowledge that the same Paramatman is in all living beings. To think that living beings are distinct from one another is only to fall prey to one's illusions. All the elements have the same Paramatman in them.

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Epilogue

Romaharshana said to the sages who had assembled in naimisharanya, "Many years ago, the great Veda Vyasa had recited the adi Purana to

sages. The sages had been delighted to learn the wisdom that was in the great Brahma Purana. Whatever Veda Vyasa had told those sages, I have now recited before you. Everyone should listen to a recital of this Purana, be he a householder or a hermit."

A brahmana who listens to a recital of the Brahma Purana becomes learned, a kshatriya becomes victorious, a vaishya becomes rich and a shudra achieves happiness. One who listens to the recital faithfully attains all his wishes. The fruits of listening to such a recital are superior to visiting the most holy of tirthas or performing the most difficult of yajnas.

Romaharshana blessed the sages and returned to his own hermitage, with the express injunction that the secrets of the Purana should never be divulged to atheists who did not believe in God.